

# A concept of writing in English language - basic sentence patterns

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## ABSTRACT

Whereas reading serves as the basis for students understanding a new language, writing gives them the opportunity to explore the new language. Now that the students are able to comprehend the English language as they read it, it is time to put them in charge of using that language to convey their meaning. Learning to write in a new language can be very challenging because you need to have the same base of knowledge as you would for reading to comprehend the words, and you also have to be able to create those words to represent the thoughts and ideas.

**Keywords:** writing, language, learning, knowledge, challenging.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the studies of reading and comprehension, the students have developed some basic skills in understanding the language as they come across it. Now that they have a basic understanding of English sounds and words, it is time to help them learn how to put those sounds and words together to create sentences that convey meaning.

## 2. BASIC SENTENCE PATTERNS

There are five basic patterns for sentence structure in English, and they differ in the elements that are present within the sentence. Any two sentences, however, no matter how different they are, contain two things: a subject and a verb. For a sentence to work there needs to be a person or thing that is doing or being something (subject) and an action or state of being that they are committing or portraying (verb). Here are the five basic sentence patterns that the students will encounter in the English language:

- **Subject-verb (S-V):** This is the simplest sentence pattern in the English language, only containing the information that *needs* to be there. Here are a few examples of sentences that follow the subject-verb pattern:
  - Mark ran.
  - Maria slept.
  - The dog plays.
  - Jimmy fell.
- **Subject-verb-object (S-V-O):** Sentences that follow this pattern are very similar to S-V sentences except that an object has been added to the sentence. In an English sentence, the object is what is being acted upon by the subject. In other words, the noun (subject) is acting (verb) upon another noun (object). Here are a few examples of sentences that follow the subject-verb-object pattern:
  - Mark ran to the store
  - Maria slept in bed.
  - The dog plays outside.
  - Jimmy fell to the floor.
- **Subject-verb-adjective (S-V-Adj):** This sentence pattern is similar to S-V-O except that the object is not a noun; it is an adjective. Since an object must be a noun or an entity that is being acted upon, when the verb acts as a state of being to set up a description of the subject, you get an

S-V-Adj sentence. Here are a few examples of sentences that follow the subject-verb-adjective pattern:

- Mark is hungry.
- Maria was tired.
- The dog looks playful.
- Jimmy seems clumsy.

- **Subject-verb-adverb (S-V-Adv):** To the untrained eye, this sentence pattern is the same as the previous one, S-V-Adj. The difference between that pattern and this pattern, however, is that while that structure saw the object turning into an adjective, this one sees it turning into an adverb. In other words, the verb no longer acts as a state of being to set up a description of the subject, but rather the words following the verb act as modifiers to the verb. Here are a few examples of sentences that follow the subject-verb-adverb pattern:

- Mark ran quickly.
- Maria slept peacefully.
- The dog plays loudly.
- Jimmy fell disastrously.

- **Subject-verb-noun (S-V-N):** As you already know, the object of a pattern has to be a noun. Just because there is a noun following the verb, however, does not mean that it is the object of the sentence. In this sentence structure, the noun is not the object because, as with S-V-Adj, the words following the verb describe the subject. Here are a few examples of sentences that follow the subject-verb pattern:
  - Mark is the store owner.
  - Maria is a doctor.
  - The dog was a corgi.
  - Jimmy became a lawyer.

### 3. CLAUSES

Looking at the examples in the previous section, you may wonder what happens when sentences get more complex. That can certainly complicate things, but at its core a sentence still follows one of the previous patterns (or two of them if it is a complex sentence). Understanding the typical sentence patterns is helpful, but the students also need to understand the basic structures that dictate sentences in English. To understand these basic sentence structures, though, we need to first discuss clauses.

**Clause:** A clause is one of the basic units in English grammar and is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb. Every sentence has at least one clause in it (because the requirements for a sentence and a clause are the same). A clause, however, does not necessarily complete a thought and therefore work alone as a sentence. There are two types of clauses, and understanding both of them is important for students who are learning to write in English for the first time.

**Dependent clause (subordinating clause):** This is exactly what it sounds like: a clause (or group of words containing a subject and a verb) that is dependent on other clauses. In other words, a dependent clause would not work alone as a sentence because it needs another clause for it to make sense. An example of a dependent clause is “because the world is ending.” The only thing that makes this clause dependent is the word “because,” which adds the implication of cause and effect to the sentence. We see the cause, but we need the effect to complete the sentence.

**Independent clause:** An independent clause is a clause (group of words containing a subject and a verb) that can exist by itself and be a complete thought and therefore complete sentence. Every sentence contains an independent clause, and all simple sentences are made up of one independent clause. An example of an independent clause is “They went down to the bomb shelter.” The absence of subordinating word (“because” in the dependent clause) makes this sentence work as a complete thought.

If we combine the two clauses, one dependent and one independent, in the previous example, we get a complex sentence, which looks like this: “Because the world is ending, they went down to the bomb shelter.” This is a complete sentence, with a dependent clause (“Because the world is ending”) marked by

a subordinating word (“Because”) presenting a cause and an independent clause (“they went down to the bomb shelter”) completing the thought with the effect.

**Basic sentence structure:** With dependent and independent clauses under our belts, we can turn our attention back to sentence structure and look closely at how these clauses can work together to create and convey meaning.

**Simple sentence:** A simple sentence contains one independent clause that stands alone as a complete thought. This is the most basic type of sentence and creates the structure for more complex sentences. Here is an example of a sentence that follows the simple sentence structure:

*Bobby drove his car to the store.*

**Compound sentence:** A compound sentence is a sentence that contains two or more independent clauses. These clauses could stand alone if they needed to but have been combined because they are related to each other. Here is an example of a sentence that follows the compound sentence structure:

*Bobby drove his car and Mark read the directions*

**Complex sentence:** A complex sentence includes an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. This means that within the sentence are subject-verb pairs that would not be able to stand alone as a complete thought. Here is an example of a sentence that follows the complex sentence structure:

*Bobby drove his car to the store to buy gum.*

In this example, we have borrowed the simple sentence and added a dependent clause “to buy gum.” The subject (“Bobby”) is implied by the independent clause, and this dependent clause cannot stand alone and make sense.

**Compound-complex sentence:** A compound-complex sentence includes at least two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses, essentially combining the elements of a compound sentence with the elements of a complex sentence. Here is an example of a sentence that follows the compound-complex sentence structure:

*Bobby drove his car and Mark read the directions when they went to the store.*

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The conclusion should come with a summation of the rest of the argument to solidify the ideas in the readers’ heads as well as a call to action or a last attempt to convince the audience to understand and believe the argument. If the students can master these basic components of a strong argument, they will find it much easier to be convincing whenever they are trying to persuade.

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